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LETTER DATED 24 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 22 June 1998 addressed to you from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations (S/1998/556).

The letter addressed to you contains nothing which is based on facts. The quotation in the letter attributed to our Vice-Minister is in fact a fictitious story, which only shows to what extent Eritrea is prepared to go to prevent the Security Council from discharging its responsibility in preventing the outbreak of a full-scale war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which, as Ethiopia has said repeatedly, is quite inevitable as long as Eritrea refuses to give peace a chance and undo what it has created by force.

I have no doubt that the Security Council and the whole world knows that an aggression was committed against Ethiopia and that its territory is still occupied by Eritrea. It is also known that, although Ethiopia has a right under international law and the Charter of the United Nations to take the necessary and appropriate action in self-defence, Ethiopia has so far imposed self-restraint in the belief that with the help of third parties, Africa and the international community, namely, the Security Council, it might be possible to find a peaceful solution to the crisis caused by the Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia.

This is the basis for Ethiopia's full cooperation with the facilitators and the mutual friends of Ethiopia and Eritrea. That the same cannot be said for Eritrea is obvious, and that is why it was felt by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that an appeal should be made to the two parties to cooperate with the facilitators and to accept and implement the proposal submitted by them.

The OAU decision reinforcing the efforts of the facilitators was adopted despite Eritrea's various attempts to prevent the OAU summit from pronouncing itself on the matter. But that Eritrean effort did not work.

Now it has become the Security Council's turn to be the focus of the Eritrean disinformation campaign, which is essentially aimed at preventing the Council form reinforcing whatever slim chance there is for resolving this tragic crisis through peaceful means. This is Ethiopia's wish, and its first priority, as a means of protecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity, which have been violated by Eritrea. We felt that the Security Council could contribute to this objective by putting the necessary pressure on Eritrea, as the OAU summit had already done. We wanted the Security Council to be seized with the matter because we thought the pressure coming from the Security Council could make the Eritrean authorities see reason and give peace a chance. The Eritrean wish is to divert the attention of the Security Council from the crux of the matter and from the core issue that needs to be addressed so that the crisis can be resolved peacefully. That core issue is the removal by Eritrea of the new fact it has created in Ethiopia by violating its sovereignty. In short, what Eritrea has created by force should be undone, first and foremost. That is what the facilitators have proposed and that is what the OAU summit has endorsed. Eritrea should not be allowed to succeed in confusing the international community through disinformation.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative